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# INFERNO.

3041/D 87

A-I<sup>o</sup>-1

# INFERNO.





**THE FIRST TEN CANTOS**  
**OF THE**  
**INFERNO**  
**OF**  
**DANTE ALIGHIERI.**

NEWLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.

---

**BOSTON:**  
**WILLIAM D. TICKNOR.**  
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....." maggior di lui qui non fu mai "  
Michel-Angelo Buonarroti

## ON A BUST OF DANTE.

---

See, from this counterfeit of him  
Whom Arno shall remember long,  
How stern of lineament, how grim  
The father was of Tuscan song.  
There but the burning sense of wrong,  
Perpetual care and scorn abide;  
Small friendship for the lordly throng;  
Distrust of all the world beside.

Faithful if this wan image be,  
No dream his life was—but a fight;  
Could any Beatrice see  
A lover in that anchorite?  
To that cold Ghibeline's gloomy sight  
Who could have guessed the visions came  
Of Beauty, veiled with heav'nly light,  
In circles of eternal flame?

The lips, as Cumae's cavern close,  
The cheeks, with fast and sorrow thin,  
The rigid front, almost morose,  
But for the patient hope within,  
Declare a life whose course hath been  
Unsuiled still, though still severe,  
Which, through the wavering days of sin,  
Kept itself icy-chaste and clear.

Not wholly such his haggard look  
 When wandering once, forlorn, he strayed,  
 With no companion save his book,  
 To Corvo's hushed monastic shade;  
 Where, as the Benedictine laid  
 His palm upon the pilgrim guest,  
 The single boon for which he prayed  
 The convent's charity was rest.\*

Peace dwells not here—this rugged face  
 Betrays no spirit of repose;  
 The sullen warrior sole we trace,  
 The marble man of many woes.  
 Such was his mien when first arose  
 The thought of that strange tale divine,  
 When hell he peopled with his foes,  
 The scourge of many a guilty line.

War to the last he waged with all  
 The tyrant canker-worms of earth;  
 Baron and duke, in hold and hall,  
 Cursed the dark hour that gave him birth;  
 He used Rome's harlot for his mirth;  
 Plucked bare hypocrisy and crime;  
 But valiant souls of knightly worth  
 Transmitted to the rolls of Time.

O Time! whose verdicts mock our own,  
 The only righteous judge art thou;  
 That poor, old exile, sad and lone,  
 Is Latium's other Virgil now:  
 Before his name the nations bow:  
 His words are parcel of mankind,  
 Deep in whose hearts, as on his brow,  
 The marks have sunk of Dante's mind.

\* It is told of Dante that when he was roaming over Italy, he came to a certain monastery, where he was met by one of the friars, who blessed him, and asked what was his desire—to which the weary stranger simply answered "*Pace*."





## DESCRIPTION OF THE INFERNO OF DANTE.

"THE *Inferno of Dante* is like an inverted cone, whose base is at the surface of the earth, the apex in its centre. It is divided into *Nine Circles*, in each of which is punished a different kind of sin. Some of the circles are subdivided into as many more compartments as there are different species of the same sin. The circles grow smaller in proportion as they approach the centre of the earth, but the torments increase in an inverse ratio to their circumference. At the bottom is *Lucifer*, the basis, as it were, and support of the whole edifice. Between the *Gate* of the Inferno and the river *Acheron*, beyond which the Inferno properly begins, are tormented the *Vile* and *Selfish*—those who knew not how to deserve either praise or blame. Between the *Acheron* and the *Styx* are contained the first *five circles*, viz : First, *Limbo* ; second, of *Carnal Sinners* ; third, of *Gluttons* ; fourth, of *Prodigal* and *Avaricious* ; and fifth, of *Wrathful*. Having passed the *Styx*, we enter the *Fortress of Dis*, where we find a vast plane, which is the *sixth circle*—the abode of *Heretics*. We descend from this into the *seventh circle* by a *steep and rugged Rock*. In the *seventh, eighth, and ninth circles*, situated between the rugged Rock and *Cocytus*, are punished the *Violent*, the *Fraudulent*, and the *Traitors*."

# IN F E R N O . H E L L .

---

## CANTO THE FIRST.

### THE FOREST.

MIDWAY through our life's journey, in a wood  
Obscure and wild I found myself astray.

Ah! to describe how rough it was—how rude  
That savage forest—chills me to this day.

Scarce death more dread than its remembrance were,  
Yet faithfully what good I gained to show,

I will discover all I witnessed there,  
Though how I entered it I hardly know :

For sleep o'ermastered me when first I went  
From the true path, erroneous and forlorn ;

But having reached the base of an ascent  
Which formed that heart-appalling valley's bourn,

Lifting my look, its shoulders I beheld

Robed in the PLANET's rays who leads aright

Through every darksome pass ; this partly quelled  
The fear which froze me all that piteous night.

Like one, cast breathless, gasping from the spray,  
Who eyes the watery peril from the shore,  
So I, still shuddering, turned me to survey  
The track which none e'er scaped alive before.  
Then, after easing my worn limbs with rest,  
On through the wilderness I wandered, still  
Keeping my lower foot most firmly pressed,  
When lo! beginning now to climb the hill,  
A PANTHER, glist'ning in a dappled hide,  
Averse to fly, though light she seemed and fleet,  
Hind'ring my way, before me I descried,  
And often turned, intending to retreat.

The time was morning, and the sun above  
The world was riding with his kindred stars,  
His old companions, from the day when Love  
Divine first launched their adamantine cars;  
Hope cheered my heart to mark the dawning bright,  
The season sweet, the creature's lively dress;  
But soon a LION met my startled sight,  
Whose fearful shape renewed my late distress.  
Raising his rabid head, with hungry mien,  
Tow'rd me he stalked—fright'ning the very air!  
With him, a FEMALE WOLF—insatiate—lean—  
The curse of millions dwelling in despair.  
Though gaunt, she looked so crammed with every  
lust,  
And caused such horror through my soul to creep,

That I began to falter and mistrust  
My power to win the summit of the steep.

As one who gleans at will his easy gains  
Until some luckless time when all is lost,  
Then sore disheartened, bitterly complains,  
Ev'n such was I by that mad monster crost.  
With gradual step she strode, and forced me back  
Where the sun failed the silence to illume ;  
But while I thus receded on my track,  
A form before me glimmered through the gloom.  
Darkling amid the deep obscure he seemed,\*  
Whom faintly marking in that desert glade :  
" Whate'er thou art, O pity me ! " I screamed,  
" Whether a mortal man, or but a shade."

" No man," he answered ; " once I was a man ;  
Mantua my Lombard parents called their home ;  
In Julius' reign, though late, my life began,  
And under good Augustus passed at Rome.  
In those false days, by lying gods o'errun,  
A Poet I ; and sang of him who came  
From burning Troy, Anchises' righteous son,  
When all proud Ilion melted in one flame.  
But thou, so rough a struggle why repeat ?  
Why rather climb'st thou not this mountain side,

\* This and subsequent ciphers refer to the notes in the Appendix.

Of all delight the source and happy seat?"  
Whereto, abashed and wondering, I replied :

" Art thou that VIRGIL, then, that mighty spring,  
Who pour'st of eloquence so vast a stream?

O light and glory of the race who sing !  
Let it avail me, that with love extreme

And zeal unwearied, I have searched thy book ;  
Thou my choice author art, my master thou,

Thou the sole fountain whence my genius took  
The style whose beauty decorates my brow.

Behold yon monster in my road ! whose rage  
Makes my veins curdle and my pulses quake ;

Defend me from her, thou illustrious sage !"  
Whereat, observing how I wept, he spake.

" This horrid glen would'st thou escape unharmed,  
Needs must thou travel back some different way,

For yonder brute 'gainst which thou criest, alarmed,  
Permits none else on her vile path to stray.

Nay—every trespasser with death prevents ;  
So bad by nature, so accursed at core,

Her greedy appetite she ne'er contents,  
But after gorging, still howls on for more.

With many a beast already she hath lain,  
And shall with many more unite in lust,

Till comes the GREYHOUND, slaying her with pain :  
HE will not feed on earthly dross and dust,

But wisdom, love, and virtue ;—HE shall dwell  
Twixt the two Feltros ; comfort HE shall spread  
O'er Latium's land, for which Camilla fell,  
Turnus, Euryalus, and Nisus bled.

'Tis HE shall worry her through every town,  
Till back to HELL, wherefrom she first arose—  
Envy's rank spawn—HE shall have dragged her  
down ;

There, for thy good, to lead thee I propose.

Come, thou shalt follow me, and I will be  
Through regions infinite and dark thy guide,  
Where thou shalt hear the desperate shrieks, and see  
Souls who for ages have in anguish cried :

These crave a second death, but happier some  
Shalt thou behold who dwell in flames content,  
Hoping at last amid the blest to come ;  
'Mongst whom hereafter would'st thou make th' ascent,

Unto a spirit worthier far than I  
At parting I must render thee ; because

He, the Great Potentate, who reigns on high,  
Deemed me unfaithful to his holy laws.<sup>2</sup>

He through my guidance, therefore, none admits  
To that pure City where he rules, directs,  
And on his lofty throne Almighty sits.  
Happy ! thrice happy, whom he there elects ! ”

Then I to him : “ O Poet ! I desire,  
Ev'n by that God unknown to thee of old ;

So that myself may scape those evils dire,  
And whatsoever worse remains untold ;  
That thou wilt bring me to the mentioned place,  
Yea let me look upon Saint Peter's gate,  
And view the woes of that abandoned race."  
Then the shade moved, and I behind him straight.

# IN F E R N O . H E L L .

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## CANTO THE SECOND.

DANTE, EMBOLDENED BY VIRGIL, FOLLOWS HIM TO HELL.

DAY was departing, and the dusky light  
Freed earthly creatures from their labor's load;  
I only rose and girt myself to fight  
The struggle with compassion and my road.  
Paint it, my memory now, in truth's own hue!  
O Muse! O soaring genius help me here!  
O mind, recording all that met my view!  
Here must thy native nobleness appear.

Thus I began: "O thou who art my guide,  
Poet! what strength my humble virtue hath  
Examine well, and be my merits tried,  
Ere me thou trust on such an arduous path.  
The sire\* of Silvius thou inform'st us, went

\* *Æneas*.



To realms eternal, animated still

With sense and life, in clay corruption pent,  
Permitted by th' Arch Foe of every ill ;

But gracious heav'n weighed then the high result,  
Both *who* and *what* should from his loins proceed ;

Nor to man's reason seems the cause occult,  
Since he was in the empyreal sphere decreed

The future father of benignant Rome,  
And Rome's proud realm, which both were preordained

To be the holy seat and sacred home  
Of him who sits where greater Peter reigned.

That visit,\* famous now o'er all the globe,  
Revealed events which brought, in season due,

His final conquest and the papal robe :  
The 'chosen vessel' journeyed thither too,  
To strengthen more that Faith wherein alone

The primal steps of our salvation lie ;

But why to me were such indulgence shown ?  
For no Æneas, no Saint Paul am I.

Me worthy ! no ; I cherish no such dream ;  
Should I resign me to thy charge, I fear

Th' attempt would prove but madness in the extreme,  
Thou'rt wise ; to thee my meaning must be clear."

As one who wavers in his wish—by doubt  
Discouraged wholly from his first design,

Thus I, on HELL's dim coast, in thought wore out  
The rash emprise which had before been mine.

\* That visit—of Æneas to the world of spirits.

“ If I thy words have understood aright,”  
Serenely answered that majestic shade,  
“ Thy mind is rendered impotent by fright,  
Which oftentimes a mortal will invade,  
Thwarting his valiant action, as a beast  
By every shadowy phantom is deterred ;  
From which poor cowardice to be released,  
Mark wherefore I am come, and what I’ve heard.  
When first for thee compassion touched my breast,  
With those I dwelt who in suspense remain ;  
A LADY called me, beautiful and blest !  
Whom I besought her mandates to explain.  
Brighter her eyes beamed than the ruling star !  
And thus she spake, in accents mild and low,  
And tones all music, as an angel’s are :  
‘ Know, gracious Mantuan, gentle spirit ! know ;  
Thou, whose fame lives, and shall till motion end !  
In the wild waste, opposed upon his track,  
A friend of mine, yet ah ! not fortune’s friend,  
Trembling with terror, from his way turns back.  
And much I fear, by what in heav’n I heard,  
That I to succor him have ris’n too late,  
So far from his true pathway he has erred.  
Then hie thee, Virgil, with thy phrase ornate,  
Yea, with whate’er his safety may require,  
By helping him give comfort unto me ;

I BEATRICE\* am who thus desire,  
 And come from where again I long to be.  
 Love called me here, love bids me now discourse;  
 When I shall stand before my Master's eye,  
 Oft unto him thy praise I will enforce '—  
 The virgin ceased, and thus responded I :

' O blest with virtue ! which exalts mankind  
 Above each race of that inferior sphere  
 Whose heav'nly orbit is the most confined,  
 Lady ! thy sweet commandment charms mine ear.

Entreat no more—already thou 'rt obeyed—  
 And ev'n such prompt obeying seems too slow ;  
 But tell me, wherefore, from thy circle strayed,  
 Thy longed for home, thou ventur'st here below ? '

' Deeply thou questionest ; briefly then,' she said,  
 ' I will inform thee why without alarm,

I wander here ; there nothing is to dread,  
 Save what perchance may work a brother's harm.

Such things alone are to be feared, and such  
 Have I been fashioned by the grace of God,

That me thy misery hath no pow'r to touch,  
 No, nor the flames of this accursed abode.

In heav'n one Gentle Mourner so laments  
 The sore distress I send thee to relieve,

\* The reader is requested to adopt the Italian pronunciation of Beatrice—sounding all the syllables.—*Lord Byron's Note to Proph. of Dante.*

That Justice in its rigor half relents ;  
From her did Lucia this command receive.

‘ Thy servant needs thy help ;’ she whispered—‘ go ;  
To thy sole care his journey I commit :’—

Then Lucia, cruelty’s most constant foe,  
Came where I wont by Rachel’s side to sit.

‘ Why, Beatrice, praise of God !’ she said,  
‘ Speedest thou not thy lover to assist,

Who for thy sake the vulgar crowd hath fled ?  
Hear’st thou ? or can’st thou such complaint resist ?

See’st thou the death wherewith he needs must cope  
Over that stream whose waves like ocean’s toss ?’

She spake—‘ no worldling ever sped in hope  
Of profit swiftlier, or in fear of loss,

Than I, at hearing her mine office teach,  
Left my loved seat and hither hast’ning came,  
All confident in thy majestic speech,  
Which thee and all thy pupils guides to fame.’

Soon as her lips had reasoned thus, she turned  
Her shining eyes with drops of pity filled,

Wherefore to aid thee ardently I burned,  
And hurried hither as the maiden willed.

’Twas I who saved thee from the SHE-WOLF’s wrath,  
O’er the fair mount which hindered so thy road ;—

What now ? why, why dost falter in thy path ?  
Why should thy heart so timidly forebode ?

Why art not fearless, resolute and free ?  
Since three such beings, beautiful and blest !  
Ev'n in the courts of heav'n watch over thee,  
And so much good my promise hath exprest."

As flowrets, by the frosty breath of night  
Shut up and drooping, soon as daylight glows,  
Spring on their stems all open and upright ;  
Ev'n so my wearied courage freshly rose,  
And such gay spirits coursed my bosom through,  
That like a hero I began to say,

" O kind was she to my defence who flew,  
And gracious thou so quickly to obey.

The truth alone that gentle angel spake,  
In her kind words, while thou thyself, with thine  
Dost in my bosom such desire awake,  
That gladly I renew my first design.

Then since one wish conducts us both, lead on !  
Thou art my lord, my master, and my guide."

Thus I addressed the shadow, and anon  
Through the deep woody way began to glide.

# INFERNO.

## HELL.

---

### CANTO THE THIRD.

THE ENTRANCE OF HELL: THE PLACE OF THE SELFISH AND  
SLOTHFUL: THE RIVER ACHERON.

“THROUGH me ye reach the City of Despair :  
Through me eternal wretchedness ye find :  
Through me among perdition’s race ye fare :  
Justice inspired my lofty Founder’s mind ;  
Power, Love, and Wisdom—heav’nly, first, most  
high,  
Framed me ere aught created else had been,  
Save things eternal—and eterne am I.  
Leave here all hope, O ye who enter in !”

These words upon the gateway, overhead,  
In blackest letters written I discerned.

“Master, their sense is terrible,” I said,  
And thus to me the prudent sage returned :

“ Perish each coward thought; be firm, be bold;  
We’ve reached the place wherein, as told thou’ wast,  
The miserable race thou shalt behold,  
The good of whose intelligence is lost.”

And thereupon my hand he took in his,  
With a glad look, fresh courage to bestow,  
And straight unfolded all the mysteries,  
Mid sighs, laments, and hollow howls of wo  
Which loud resounding through the starless air,  
Forced tears of pity from mine eyes at first;  
For divers tongues, and horrid language there,  
With words of agony, wrath’s frequent burst,  
Shrieks, and hoarse voices, with a noise of hands,  
Mingling forevermore, in tumult strange,  
As when a whirlwind tosses round the sands,  
Vexed the thick air which knows no season’s change.

And I, my head in stupid horror bound,  
Said—“ Master, tell me, what is this I hear?  
What wretched souls are these in anguish drowned?”  
To which he answered—“ This award severe  
On those unhappy spirits is bestowed,  
Of whom nor infamy nor good was known,  
Joined with that wicked crew which unto God  
Nor false nor faithful, served themselves alone.  
Heaven drove them forth, its beauty not to stain;  
And Hell’s profound so vile a tribe forbears,

From whom no glory could the guilty gain.”  
“ Master,” I asked, “ what special pain is theirs ?  
Of what fierce tortures are such groans begot ? ”  
“ Briefly,” said he, “ to die they have no hope :  
Envious they are of ev’ry other lot,  
In such a blind and grovelling state they grope.  
The world their hateful mem’ry doth contemn ;  
Mercy herself would scorn for them to plead ;  
Justice disdains them—we’ll not speak of them—  
Give them a glance, one only, and proceed.”

Then I who gazed, beheld a flag unfurled,  
Indignant, as it seemed, at any rest,  
So swiftly, as ’twas borne along, it whirled ;  
And after it a countless legion pressed.  
Such multitudes I ne’er could have believed  
By conquering Death had ever low been laid ;  
And looking round amongst them, I perceived  
Him who through fear the Great Refusal made.<sup>3</sup>  
Instant, I comprehended then and knew  
That God himself, and those with God at strife  
Alike despised that execrable crew—  
Dead souls, which e’en when living, had no life.  
Naked they were, and stung from toe to crown  
By wasps and hornets buzzing round them thick.  
From their scarred faces to their feet streamed down  
Tears, mixed with blood, which loathsome worms  
did lick.



Now, gazing farther still, I could discern  
A crowd upon a river's ample shore.

"Who are those? Master, what I fain would learn,  
Makes them appear thus anxious to pass o'er?

Their forms I scarcely through the gloom can trace."

"These things," he answered, "thou shalt know anon,  
Soon as we slack awhile our painful pace,  
On the sad margin of old Acheron."

Then, fearing lest too freely I had spoke  
What to my guide importunate might seem,  
I bent mine eyes, abashed, nor silence broke,  
Until we reached the borders of the stream.

And toward us, in a vessel, rowing, lo!  
An aged, hoary man, with hair snow-white,  
Came crying, "Wo! to ye, bad spirits, wo!  
Never hope ye t' enjoy heaven's blessed sight.

I come to bear ye to the other bank;  
In darkness infinite—in heat—in cold.

But thou, who still dost with the living rank,  
Begone! nor mingle with the dead so bold."

Then, seeing that obedience I declined:  
"Some other way approach the strand!" screamed he,  
You pass not here—another ferry find—  
Some lighter bark than mine must carry thee!"

"Vex not thyself, O Charon! thus 'tis willed,  
Where what is willed is done—demand no more"—

My leader thus the shaggy helmsman stilled,  
Who pilots all that livid marish o'er.

Round his red eyes rolled wheels of living flame;  
But those tired ghosts, quiv'ring like naked birds,  
Their teeth all chatt'ring, paler still became,  
Soon as they caught th' inexorable words.

Then God Almighty they blasphemed, and those  
From whom they sprung, their parents and their kin;  
The human race—the seed wherefrom they rose—  
The hour and place they were engendered in.

So, as all must who fear not God, the shoal  
Withdrew, loud howling toward that sinful shore;

Fiend Charon with his eyes of burning coal  
Beck'ning them, beats each laggard with his oar;

And gathers them together, as they drop,  
Like leaves in autumn, falling thickly round,

Each after each, till every tow'ring top  
Yields all its yellow vesture to the ground;

Ev'n in like manner, Adam's seed impure,  
Throw from the brink their figures, one by one,

At given signs, as birds are ta'en by lure,  
Then glide together o'er the waters dun.

And ere they have departed, draweth nigh  
Another spectral army to the strand.

"Son!" said my gracious master, "all who die  
In their God's wrath, meet here from ev'ry land.

Justice divine still goads them onward so,  
That very fear becomes desire at last,  
And o'er the flood right willingly they go :  
By no good spirit ever is it passed.

Therefore did Charon of thyself complain,  
And what he meant thou comprehendest now."

He ceased—the gloomy region shook amain !  
Still its mere memory bathes with sweat my brow.

Rumbled that land of tears with gathering wind,  
Whence a red lightning flickered over Hell,  
And wholly vanquishing my palsied mind ;  
Ev'n as a man whom sleep o'ertakes I fell.

# IN F E R N O .

## HELL.

---

### CANTO THE FOURTH.

#### THE FIRST CIRCLE, OR LIMBO.

My brain's deep sleep was broken by a stroke  
Of jarring thunder, so that roused upright,  
Like one by sudden violence awoke,  
With eyes refreshed, I rolled around my sight ;  
And fixedly I gazed, the place to know  
Wherein I found me—o'er the brink I hung  
Of the dread valley of the abyss of wo,  
Whence gathered groans in ceaseless thunders rung.  
Dark—fathomless it yawned—clouds o'er it curled—  
Down in its depths I pored, but nought discerned ;  
“ Descend we now to yonder rayless world,”  
The Poet said, and deadly pale he turned ;  
“ Thou shalt be second, I will go the first”—  
“ Whereto,” said I, observing his changed hue,

“ If thou’rt dismayed, who still my strength hast  
nurst,  
How shall I dare this journey to pursue ? ”  
Then he to me : “ The anguish thus severe  
Of those who moan below there dye my face  
With pity’s tinct, which thou mistak’st for fear ;  
But come, our long road chides this ling’ring pace.”

Herewith he entered, and conveyed me in  
To the First Circle of the pit profound,  
Where nought distinct I heard, but one low din  
Of sighs that shook th’ eternal breeze around.

Sighs born of mental, not of corporal throes,  
Mid countless herds of women, babes and men.

“ Inquir’st not,” said my master, “ who are those,  
Yon troop of spirits just within thy ken ?

Ere thou proceed, this to thy knowledge add ;  
No sinners they—yet, though their works were good,

’Tis not enough ; since they no Baptism had,  
Which thy Faith’s portal must be understood.

Christ’s coming, too, since they were born before,  
(And numbered with such hapless ones am I)

They could but ignorantly God adore,  
For which deficiency alone we die ;

Punished thus far—that in desire we dwell,  
Ceaseless desire where hope hath never birth.”

I grieved to hear him, for I knew right well  
Hung in that LIMBO many a soul of worth.

"Tell me, my master, tell me sire," I said;  
"T' assure that Faith which sets all doubt at rest,—  
By his own merits, or another's sped,  
Scaped any e'er this realm to join the Blest?"

Then he, who well my covert meaning knew,  
Answered: "Herein I had not long been bound,  
When an All-puissant One I saw march through,  
With victory's radiant sign triumphal crowned.

He then led forth our first great father's shade,  
Abel his son, Noah whom Heav'n loved most,  
Law-giving Moses, him who best obeyed,  
Abra'am the patriarch, royal David's ghost.

Then Israel, his sire, his sons and her  
For whom he served so long, Laban's fair stem,  
Rachel, with more, to bliss did he transfer—  
No human souls were saved preceding them."

During these words our pace we did not slack,  
But passed the forest—forest let me say—

So thickly swarmed the spirits round our track.  
Nor had we far descended on our way,

When, through the gloom of that black hemisphere,  
A light I noticed which the darkness quelled,  
And partly saw, though still not very near,  
A race of dignity that region held.

"Thou who all knowledge honor'st, and all art!  
What souls are those who seem thus glorified?"

Why from the others are they set apart ? ”  
Said he : “ Their names are sounded far and wide ;  
Some grace Heav’n grants them, for thy world’s esteem,”  
So speaking, fell a voice upon mine ear,  
“ Honor and glory to the Bard Supreme !  
Whose shade which left us lately now draws near.”  
Then, as this voice grew quiet, and was hushed,  
Four mighty shades I saw advancing, dim,  
No sorrow paled their cheeks nor gladness flushed ;  
“ Look ! ” my good master said ; “ take note of Him,  
The first, who bears a sword and chief is reckoned,  
’Tis Homer, of all bards the sovereign classed ;  
Horace the satirist, he comes the second ;  
The third is Ovid ; Lucan is the last ;  
Since all their voices, mingling thus in one,  
Give me a title which alike we share,  
They do me honor, and ’tis nobly done.”  
Thus the whole school I saw assembled, fair,  
Of Him, song’s loftiest lord, that o’er the rest  
Soars like an eagle ; they conferred awhile,  
Then tow’rd me nodding, much good will exprest,  
Whereat my master blandly deigned to smile.  
Nay, honor they devised for me still higher,  
In bidding me with their sage throng unite,  
So I was sixth amid that learned choir,  
And on we moved, still travelling tow’rd the light.

Speaking of things improper for my rhymes,  
Though fitting there, we still pursued our road  
Tow'rd a proud castle, walled about seven times,  
Round which, a fair defence, a streamlet flowed.  
O'er this we passed, as it had solid been,  
And through seven gates, with our companions wise,  
Entered a meadow fresh with living green,  
Where dwelt a race with grave, majestic eyes.  
Authority was writ in every face ;  
Sweetly they spake, but seldom : we withdrew  
Into an open, luminous, high place,  
So that the whole were facile to my view.

Straight was I shown, on that enamelled mead,  
Those mighty spirits whom the world commends,  
Whom to have looked on, makes me proud indeed ;  
I saw Electra circled with her friends,  
Hector I marked—Æneas mid the ring—  
Cæsar, all armed and like a hawk, fierce-eyed ;  
Penthesilæa, Camilla too, and king  
Latinus resting by Lavinia's side.  
Brutus I saw, who Tarquin's tribe expelled ;  
Cornelia—Marcia—Julia—chaste Lucrece—  
And Saladin sequestered I beheld :  
Then, looking up, the master sage of Greece,  
The Stagirite, who there all-honored sat  
Amid his philosophic household band,



While Socrates, I marked, and Plato gat  
Before the rest, and nearest him did stand.

Thales I saw and Zeno at a glance,  
With Anaxagoras—Diogenes—

Democritus, who thought earth made by chance—  
Heraclitus—Orpheus—Dioscorides,  
Skilled in all qualities—Empedocles—  
Seneca—Livy—Tully—matchless men!

Earth-measuring Euclid—Ptolemy—with these  
Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicen :

Averroës, that commentator vast,  
But ah ! of all I cannot duly speak,  
So by my subject is my pow'r surpassed,  
Whate'er I say compared with truth seems weak.

We six companions here in two divide ;  
From that still air to one with tempests shook  
I come, conducted by my sapient guide,  
A gloomier part, by ev'ry beam forsook.

# IN F E R N O .

## HELL.

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### CANTO THE FIFTH.

THE SECOND CIRCLE : THE PUNISHMENT OF THE UNCHASTE,  
AMONG WHOM DANTE RECOGNISES FRANCESCA DA RIMINI.

FROM that First Circle parting thus, I went  
Down to the next which girds a lesser space,  
Yet where worse pains the howling souls torment;  
There Minos grinning stands with hideous face :

He scans the faults of all who enter in,  
And even as himself he doth enfold,  
Passeth his verdict upon every sin,  
By each revealing spirit freely told.

How many ranks, according to their crimes,  
Each must descend he noteth with his tail,  
Winding it round his loins so many times ;  
Numbers before him always wait and wail.

By turns they come to judgment, and confess,  
And hear their doom, then down are hurried straight.

“O thou, who seek'st this mansion of distress!”  
Cried Minos, pausing in his work of fate—  
“Beware! beware in whom thou would'st confide;  
Take heed of entering; trust not this broad way.”  
“Wherefore this bootless clamor?” said my guide—  
“His destined passage dare not thou to stay.  
Vex thee not, Minos, even thus 'tis willed  
Where what is willed is done—demand no more.”  
Then were mine ears with notes of anguish thrilled,  
And countless lamentations pained me sore.

I reached a spot with not a glimmer blest,  
Which roared like ocean torn by warring storms;  
Th' infernal blast which never knoweth rest,  
In furious wreck whirls on the shadowy forms;  
Driving and madly dashing them along,  
And when destruction's very brink they reach,  
Then shriek, then scream and yell the frantic  
throng,  
And heaven's High King blaspheme with horrid  
speech.

Such pangs, I found, those Carnal Sinners feel  
Who to low impulses their reason bowed;  
And like as starlings, in the winter, wheel  
Their airy flight—a large, wide-wavering crowd—  
So that fierce gust these erring spirits blows  
This way, and that way, round the fiery cope,

Nor can they find (I will not say repose,) But even of diminished pain one hope.

Or like as cranes—a melancholy swarm—  
Go moaning through the air, in one long trail,  
So I beheld before the pelting storm,  
Those ghosts fast flying with incessant wail.

“Master,” I asked, “what wretched race is that,  
In this black air scourged thus with pangs extreme?”

“The foremost of them,” he replied, “once sat  
Empress o’er many-languaged lands Supreme.

In lust she grew so boundless and so free,  
That, haply so to vindicate her shame,  
She rendered lewdness lawful by decree ;  
Semiramis that is, well known to fame.

The land the Sultan sways she ruled in pride,  
To Ninus the successor and the spouse ;

That other is the am’rous suicide,\*  
Who to Sicheus’ ashes brake her vows.”

Voluptuous Cleopatra next I saw ;  
Helen, the guilty cause of crimes so vast !

On great Achilles next I looked with awe,  
Who fought with love eternal, to the last.

Paris and Tristan then, and many more,  
More than a thousand shadows as they flew,  
He pointed out to me, and named them o’er,  
On earth whom Love’s unhallowed passion slew.

\* Dido.

When I had heard my teacher call by name,  
These knights and ladies of the olden time,  
My wildered soul compassion quite o'ercame,  
And I began—"Great builder of the rhyme!  
Fain would I speak with yonder pair who glide  
Together, light, before this whirlwind borne;"  
"Watch them until they're nearer," he replied,  
"Then by that love whose guidance here they mourn,  
Beseech them—they will come:" whereat I *did*  
Invoke them, when the gale had blown them near—  
"O troubled spirits! come, unless forbid  
By some High Pow'r, your story let us hear."

As wandering doves, bound homeward, through  
the sky,  
Called by desire, with wings wide open thrown,  
Steadily tow'rd their pleasant dwellings fly,  
Sped ever onward by their wish alone;  
So, from the throng where Dido ranks, they sailed  
Tow'rd me, through that dim atmosphere malign,  
My passionate entreaty so prevailed—  
"O breathing being, gracious and benign!  
Who com'st to visit through this lurid air,  
Us, whose heart's blood hath stained the world above,  
To HIM who rules the universe, our prayer  
Should rise for thy soul's peace,—had we HIS love;  
But since thou pitiest thus our ill-starred fate,  
Listen—or speak; for whatsoe'er ye will

We are prepared to hear of and relate,  
While for a space this torturing blast seems still."

" My native land is seated on the shore  
Where Po descends in Adria's peace to rest,  
Raging with all his followers no more.  
Love, quickly kindling every gentler breast,  
Fired this fond shadow with the beauteous form  
Bereft me so ! I shudder at the way—  
Love, who permits no loved one not to warm,  
Me too subduing, charmed with potent sway :  
Ev'n here thou seest the rapture hath not died :  
Love, Love conducted both to one fell death :  
But Cain's own pangs our murd'rer must abide :"  
These broken words came wafted on their breath.

During their speech, low down I hung my head ;  
" What thinkest thou ? " inquired my guide—" Alas !  
What tender thoughts, how strong desires," I said,  
" Reduced them to so dolorous a pass ! "  
Then turning unto them, I thus began :  
" Francesca ! tears must overflow mine eyes ;  
My pitying soul thy martyr-throes unman ;  
But tell me—in the time of happy sighs,  
How gave Love utterance to your wishes first ? "  
And she to me : " The mightiest of all woes  
Is in the midst of misery to be cursed,  
With bliss remembered ; this thy master knows.

Yet, wouldst thou learn our passion's root and head,  
As one may speak whose eyes with grief are dim,  
Ev'n so will I. Together once we read  
The tale of LANCILOT—how LOVE snared *him*.

Alone we were, without suspecting aught;  
Oft in perusal changed our cheeks their hue,  
And oft our eyes each other's glances caught;  
But one sole passage 'twas that both o'erthrew.

At reading of *the longed for smile which he,*  
*That burning lover, by his kissing blest,*

This dearest—never shall we parted be!  
His lips to mine—to mine, all trembling, pressed.

The writer proved our Pandar with his book—  
That day we read no farther on." She stopped—

The other ghost so moaned, that pity strook  
My senses numb, and like a corpse I dropped.

# INFERNO.

## HELL.

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### CANTO THE SIXTH.

THE THIRD CIRCLE, OR THAT OF THE GLUTTONS.

MY mind returning which had been so drowned  
In pity, list'ning to that kindred pair,

Wildered with grief, I mark, on gazing round,  
New pangs, new victims, writhing ev'rywhere.

Where'er I move, where'er mine eye explores  
The peopled gloom, where'er I turn again :

For the Third Circle now I reach, where pours  
One heavy—cursed—cold—relentless rain.

Thick, muddy water—snow and hailstones coarse  
That rayless atmosphere, eternal, drench ;

Ceaseless the flood, unchanged in kind or force,  
The land it soaks is putrid with one stench.

Fell monster Cerberus, with hideous clack  
Barks at the sinners with his triple jaws,



Red eyes he hath—a beard bedaubed and black—  
A stomach turgid—armed with fangs his paws.  
’Tis his th’ unholy crew to tear and rend  
Whose yells are like the howlings of a hound,  
In that mad storm, and often to defend  
One with the other side, they turn them round.

When Cerberus, that serpent’s offspring grim,  
Spied us, his mouths he opened and exposed  
His jaggy tusks, quiv’ring in every limb.  
Hereat my guide stooped down, with hands unclosed,  
And filled them with a portion of the mire,  
Which down those rav’nous throats he straitway cast.  
As bays a greedy dog with fierce desire,  
But quiet grows, mumbling the snatched repast  
For which alone his hunger fights and strains,  
Ev’n so were hushed those ugly gullets three  
Of dev’lish Cerberus, whose howl so pains  
The dizzy ghosts that deaf they long to be.

We walked o’er shadows by the bitter sleet,  
Battered and crushed, and on their empty forms  
Which seemed corporeal, trod with trembling feet;  
As on the ground they lay in huddling swarms.  
All saving one, which started up and said,  
As on we strode past that poor, sitting ghost,  
“O thou ! who through this horrid Hell art led,  
Speak, recognize me, if my face thou know’st ;

Before I died full surely thou wast born :”  
 “ Haply,” said I, “ thy tortures here erase  
 All recollection of that look forlorn ;—  
 Till now methinks I never saw thy face.  
 Speak then, who art thou, in this region dun,  
 Shut up mid such foul agonies to pine ?  
 Greater there may be—more disgusting none.”  
 Said he, “ Thy native city once was mine :\*  
 Within those walls which with an envious crew  
 Like a heaped sack run o’er, my sweet life passed ;  
 Ciaccio, my townsmen, I was called by you,  
 Through Gluttony’s damned sin I fell at last.  
 Thence am I thus by this fierce tempest bruised ;  
 No single sufferer—all this wretched herd,  
 My brother ghosts, are thus severely used  
 For a like fault ;”—he ended with this word.

“ Ciaccio,” said I, “ thy miserable fate  
 Tempts me to tears and weighs my manhood down,  
 But tell me, if thou know’st, what griefs await  
 The citizens of that divided town ?—  
 Dwells any just one there ?—inform me why  
 ’Tis thus o’erwhelmed in Discord’s raging flood ? ”  
 “ After long contests,” this was his reply,  
 “ Th’ opposing sides shall come at last to blood.  
 The forest faction shall in fury drive  
 The other out, but soon itself must bow ;

\* Florence.

Within three Suns that other shall revive,  
Strong in his aid who coasting comes e'en now.

Long time a lofty part it shall sustain,  
Making its foes beneath harsh burdens groan,  
Howe'er they chafe and fret themselves in vain.  
Just persons two there are—unheard—unknown.

Envy, and Pride, and Avarice, these three  
Pernicious sparks have set all hearts on fire."

He ended speaking in this mournful key :  
"Say on !" I cried—"grant further my desire.

Tegghiaio—Farinata—both confessed  
Such worthy men ; Arrigo—Mosca too,  
Jacopo Rusticucci, with the rest

Who bent their talents virtuous deeds to do ;  
Fain would I greet them, tell me if they dwell  
(An earnest longing thrills my soul to know,)

Soothed by Heaven's airs, or poisoned in this Hell ? "  
Said he, "with blacker souls they're sunk below ;  
For diff'rent faults down tow'rd the bottom hurled :  
If thou descend, their spirits thou may'st see.

O ! when once more thou walk'st the pleasant world,  
Then, I implore thee to remember me !

I say no more, nor farther give reply"—  
He hung his head, and turned his face away,  
Scanned me a little with a sidelong eye,  
Fell mid those groping ghosts and grovelling lay.

Here spake my guide: "Nothing shall rouse him  
now

Till, when th' angelic trump shall rend earth's womb,  
Their Mighty Foe shall come with radiant brow,  
Then each again must find his dismal tomb ;  
Then each his flesh and figure shall regain,  
To hear the pealing of th' eternal doom."

So with slow footsteps, mid the filthy rain,  
Mixed up with shades, we struggled through the gloom.

And touching slightly on the future state,  
"Master," said I, "the pangs which these abide,  
After the Judgment, will they be as great,  
Or less, or worse? Return thee," he replied,  
"To thy philosophy,\* which teaches this ;  
As grows a thing more perfect, even so  
Its sense grows keener, both of pain and bliss.  
Ne'er can these wretches true perfection know,  
Yet must they look to be more perfect *then*."  
With this, and more which I conceal, we wound  
About that road until it sloped again ;  
Here Plutus that Arch-enemy we found.

Aristotle's.

# IN F E R N O .

## H E L L .

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### CANTO THE SEVENTH.

THE FOURTH CIRCLE—THAT OF MISERS AND PRODIGALS ;  
ESPECIALLY AMONG THE CLERGY—ALSO THE FIFTH CIRCLE,  
WHEREIN THE MALEVOLENT AND ANGRY ARE PUNISHED.

“ HERE, Satan, Alpha! Prince and Pontiff, here ! ”

Plutus began with accent harsh and hoarse ;

Whereat, th’ omniscient sage, my soul to cheer,  
Said : “ Fear not thou, nor falter in thy course.

Thy destined passage down this craggy path  
He shall not hinder—vain is all his might.”

Then turning to those lips that swelled with wrath,  
“ Silence, curst wolf ! ” he cried ; “ keep down thy  
spite.

On thine own entrails let thy fury feed ;  
Not without warrant are these depths explored ;

’Tis willed on high, where Heaven’s adult’rous  
breed,  
Proud rebels ! fell by Michael’s vengeful sword.”

As well-filled sails which in the tempest swell,  
Drop, with folds flapping, if the mast be rent,  
So to the earth that cruel monster fell,  
And straightway down to Hell's Fourth Pit we went.

Now deeper yet we pierced that doleful coast,  
Earth's universal evil which contains :

Just God ! ah who may reckon such a host  
As there I witnessed of new throes and pains.

Of our own crimes why should we scourges make ?  
Since not the leaping waves which upward spout

O'er wild Charybdis, when they mount and break,  
Than this damned crew, more madly bound about.

For here I marked a still more num'rous flock,  
With shrieks and tugging breasts, from side to side,  
Rolling huge weights which struck with violent  
shock ;

Then turning round, they rolled them back and cried,  
In mutual censure, " Wherefore did ye keep ? "  
And " Why did ye, so wasteful, throw away ? "

Then tow'rd the point opposed I saw them sweep,  
On either hand, to meet in fresh affray.

Thus, chanting ever their reproachful song,  
Thereby upbraiding still each other's fault,  
Back through their dismal round, the toiling throng  
Like tilters came, renewing the assault.

Heart-stung with grief, I said : " O master, mine !  
What race is this ? and those on our right hand,  
With shaven crowns—the sacerdotal sign—  
Belonged they to the Clergy's holy band ? "

" All these," he answered, " had their mental sight  
So far distorted in life's former scene,

They never used their worldly wealth aright;  
And this is plainly what these outcries mean ;  
As doomed for different sins tow'rd either bourne  
Of this sad round, they diversly advance,

There, mid yon Clergy, with their tresses shorn,  
Popes lead with Cardinals th' eternal dance ;  
Avarice o'er these once held sole masterdom."

" Teacher," said I, " amid that restless herd,  
Surely acquainted I should be with some,  
Who to my knowledge once so foully erred."

" Vain thought !" he answered ; " since the dark  
disgrace

Of their ill-spent and ignominious life,

Their forms from all remembrance doth efface ;  
Here aye they clash in this perpetual strife ;

Those with clipped locks, and these with fists shut  
close,

Shall quit their sepulchres ; for all were thrust

Either by **AVARICE**, or **PROFUSION** gross  
From the fair world t' encounter in this joust.

I will not smooth it o'er with phrases bland,  
Now may'st behold, my son ! how frail a bubble

Is that vain good, consigned to Fortune's hand,  
For which thy race fret out their hearts with trouble.

Since all the gold that underneath the moon  
Was ever dug, or in the mine yet glows,  
Could not procure one weary soul the boon,  
The trifling pittance of an hour's repose."

"O master mine! still more I would be told;  
This Fortune whom thou mention'st, what is she,  
Who seems all riches in her clutch to hold?"  
"Poor creatures!" he replied—"how blind are ye!  
Through what excess of ignorance ye fall!  
Would ye might learn, from this discourse of ours,  
That He whose wisdom so transcendeth all,  
Who gave the heav'ns he framed presiding pow'rs,  
That sphere to sphere might each responsive shine,  
And every part with equal radiance beam;  
So to earth's glories also did assign  
One general guide and guardian pow'r supreme.  
She in due time wealth's empty dower translates,  
From race to race—from blood to blood—unchecked;  
Hence come the glory and decay of states;  
Obeying all a pow'r whom none suspect;  
For, like a serpent in the grass concealed,  
While mortal wisdom 'gainst her fights in vain,  
She, ev'n as other gods their sceptres wield,  
Disposes, guides, and regulates her reign.



No truce to her mutations is allowed ;  
Necessity compels her to move fast ;  
So thick the claimants on her bounty crowd ;  
'Tis she 'gainst whom such mangling terms are cast :  
Ev'n those who most should praise, blaspheme her  
most ;  
But her their curses little can annoy,  
For blest is she—and with her fellow host !  
The first created, fills her sphere in joy.  
Now to more piteous torments we'll descend,  
Since every star which shewed its rising ray,  
When first I sped, thy journey to befriend,  
Is sinking fast and chides our long delay."

The Circle traversing, its brink we gained,  
Just o'er a filthy fount of purplish hue ;  
This, boiling over, by a ditch was drained,  
Which the dark water hardly struggled through.  
Entering another way with that sad rill,  
Whose inky dribblings down beside us crept,  
We still accompanied its course, until  
In that morass whose name is Styx they slept.  
Here at the scowling precipice's base  
I stopped, intently gazing, and beheld  
Plunged in that bog a smeared but naked race,  
With wrathful eyes and veins with anger swelled.  
These not with hands alone each other beat,  
But headlong rushed, butting and striking sore,

Met breast to breast, and fought with furious feet,  
Yea, peacemeal with their teeth each other tore.

“Behold! my son,” my gracious master said,  
“The souls of those whom Anger overthrew;  
And O! believe me, in the loathsome bed  
Of this rank fen are myriads, hid from view.  
They sigh below and by their sighing stir  
The surface bubbling as you see around,  
Fixed in the slime they murmur; ‘sad we were  
In the glad air, and on the sunshine frowned:  
Still in our blood a sullen vapor floats—  
Sad in this dreggy bottom we remain’—  
This doleful chant they gurgle in their throats,  
Too choked with mire distinctly to complain.”

Thus, a great circuit making 'twixt the mud  
And the dry bank, we reassumed our pace,  
Gazing on those who swilled the nauseous flood:  
At length we stopped beside a turret's base.

# INFERNO. HELL.

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## CANTO THE EIGHTH.

THE RIVER STYX, AND THE CITY OF DIS.

RESUMING my suspended strain, I say  
Ere to the foot of that high tow'r we came,  
Up roved our eyes—its summit to survey—  
Caught by a signal from a double flame.  
Afar, another answ'ring beacon burned,  
Dimly and distant—almost out of sight :  
Unto that Sea of knowledge then I turned,  
And questioned him ; “ What means this lofty light ?  
And who may those who fire yon cresset be ? ”  
“ Yonder,” said Virgil, “ on the filthy bog,  
What is about to happen thou shalt see,  
Unless the pool conceal it with its fog.”

Never an arrow bounded from a string,  
Whizzing so lightly through the upper air,

As I beheld a bark—a little thing—  
Cleave the thick, clouded flood and tow'rd us bear.

A single pilot steered it o'er the wave,  
Who cried, "Art come, dark spirit and abhorred?"

"Phlegyas! Phlegyas! vainly dost thou rave;  
Bootless, this time, thy clamor;" said my lord;  
"We are thine only while thou row'st across"—

Like one who inly grumbleth when he hears  
Of some foul fraud whereby he suffereth loss,  
Grim Phlegyas in his gathering rage appears.

Then with my guide I stepped aboard the bark  
Which till my ent'ring seemed devoid of weight;  
Soon as I trod that vessel old and dark,  
The prow cut deeper with th' unwonted freight.

And ploughing on through that dead sea of slime  
One rose before me, all begrimed with clay,  
Growling, "Who'rt thou, who com'st before thy  
time?"

Said I: "Although I come I shall not stay.

But who art thou, so hideous in thy pain?"  
"You see," he muttered, "I am one who mourn."

"Curst spirit!" I answered, "in thy pangs remain—  
I know thee, ev'n thus filthy and forlorn."

'Gainst us both hands he lifted, with a frown;  
Observing which, my leader thrust him back,  
Crying, "Detested dog! down with thee! down!  
Go beastly wretch, and join thy fellow pack."

Then roundabout my neck his arms he threw,  
And kissed me saying, "Thou indignant soul!  
Blest she, within whose womb thy burden grew!  
On earth his insolence brooked no control;  
No goodness o'er his name a lustre flings;  
Thence raves he thus forever, mad with wrath:  
And O, what numbers now are mighty kings,  
Who here, like swine, must wallow in this bath!  
What execration shall their memories wake!"  
"Master," said I; "my wish 'twould mainly please,  
Before we disembark from this black lake,  
To see him, weltering, plunged beneath its lees."

He thus rejoined: "Before we come much nigher  
To yonder shore, which is not yet in sight,  
Thou shalt enjoy the full of thy desire,  
And witness what will give thy soul delight."  
So, shortly I beheld that loathsome race  
On the foul ghost with horrid fury fall,  
For which my thanks I render to God's grace.  
"Philip Argenti! at him! each and all!"  
This was their cry: the frantic Florentine  
With his own teeth his limbs in anguish tore,  
Helplessly raging 'gainst his foes obscene:  
We left the miscreant here—Of him no more.  
Now lamentations loud my hearing stun;  
Forward I send mine unimpeded eye,

While thus my gracious master: "Now, my son,  
To the dark walls of Dis we're drawing nigh :  
There the sad residents by myriads grieve."  
"O master mine ! its minarets and spires  
Plain from yon hollow peering I perceive,  
All red—as issuing from enormous fires."  
"As thou descri'st," he answered, "they are dyed  
By inward fires, in this low Hell unquenched."  
So up the ditches we began to glide,  
Which that disconsolate domain intrenched.

The dismal town meseemed was iron-walled ;  
A great way round we struggled through the scum,  
Until arrived where loud the helmsman bawled,  
"Out with ye ! to the entrance ye are come."  
Then I beheld tow'rd those dark portals drive  
More than a thousand, hurled from heav'n, who said  
In angry tones : "Who's this that still alive,  
Invades the gloomy kingdom of the dead ?"  
Here my sage master those proud spirits becked,  
That privately with them he fain would talk ;  
Whereat, their contumely slightly checked,  
They said ; "Walk hither then—but singly walk.  
Let him so rashly venturing to this reign,  
By his own wit retrace his foolish road.  
Aye let him try—thou only shalt remain  
Who guard'st him through this terrible abode."

Think, reader, how I shuddered as I heard  
The surly speech of that accursed crew,  
Foreboding sadly from each bitter word  
That nevermore the sunlight I should view.

“O my dear guide! whose kindly hand,” I said,  
“Through perils infinite and foes unknown,  
More than sev’n times, my falt’ring feet has led,  
Leave me not now all helpless and alone!

Since further progress is to us denied,  
Together quickly let us travel back:”

Whereat my leader and my lord replied—  
“Fear not; our destined course no pow’r can slack.

’Tis not for them to stop what Heav’n ordains;  
Abide thou here, while I to greet them go;  
Cheer up! let hope invigorate thy veins—  
I’ll not desert thee in this world below.”

The gentle father leaves me here behind,  
To speak with them, while I remain in doubt—

With no and yes contending in my mind;  
Nor could I hear what they conferred about:

But with our foes he did not long debate,  
For they, their swiftmess putting to the proof,  
Rushed back and bolted in his face the gate;  
Returned he then to where I stood aloof.

Slowly, with fitful pace, and drooping lids,  
And downcast eyes, he came, and sighing spake:

“ Who to yon dreary walls my way forbids ? ”  
Then unto me : “ What though mine ire they wake ?  
Fear not but in this contest I shall win,  
Let them against me struggle ne’er so hard :  
This gang ere now as insolent hath been  
Up at that portal found for aye unbarred.  
Its fatal, dark inscription thou hast read ;  
And even now, descending by the slope,  
Comes without escort, through the circles dread,  
ONE whose proud hand this region’s gate shall ope.”



# IN F E R N O . H E L L .

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## CANTO THE NINTH.

THE CITY OF DIS, AND THE TERRIBLE ABODE OF THE  
ARCH-HERETICS.

THE craven color which my face had shown,  
When sadly back I saw my leader glide,  
Soon checked the transient flushing of his own ;  
Heark'ning he stood, intent and eager-eyed.

But ill his gaze could fathom that thick air,  
As thus he spake : " In this approaching fray  
Conquer we ought, . . unless . . . yet why despair ?  
Such help draws near—despite this long delay."

I noted well how his conclusion veiled  
The doubtful words wherewith his speech began,  
So that the tenor of the sentence failed ;  
Yet through my heart a timid tremor ran,  
For haply to his halting phrase I gave  
A worse construction than the bard intended.

"Say—to the bottom of this dire concave  
Hath ever any from above descended?  
Any of those who suffer in suspense?"  
To this inquiry thus my lord replied:  
"Rarely hath one of us, descending thence,  
Trod the dark way through which thy steps I guide.  
When first in flesh I ceased to be immured,  
'Tis true that hitherward I chanced to stray,  
By that Erieth's cruel art conjured,  
Who could recall dead spirits to their clay.  
She bade me enter yonder walls to lead  
A ghost from that sad round where Judas lies;  
The lowest circle, most obscure and dread,  
And farthest from the all-embracing skies.  
I know the road; thy vain mistrust forbear;  
The marsh o'er which these noisome vapors brood  
Girdles and guards the City of Despair,  
Where without strife none ever can intrude."  
Yet more he said which I remember not,  
Having been wholly ravished by mine eye,  
Tow'rd the tow'rs top, which glistened crimson hot,  
While flashed in sight three hell-born fiends on high.  
Furies—blood-stained—female in limbs and air;  
About their waists were greenest hydras wound;  
Horned snakes and vipers formed their horrid hair,  
Dangling in braids their savage temples round.

Then he who well the haggard handmaids knew  
Of everlasting sorrow's doleful queen,

Exclaimed ; " Look there ! yon fierce Erinnas view ;  
Megæra yonder on thy left is seen ;

There, on thy right, the sad Alecto wails ;  
Bewixt them scowls Tisiphone "—this spoke,

He ceased : they tore their bosoms with their nails,  
Sore bruised themselves, and hideous outcries woke.

Close to the gentle bard I clung dismayed :  
" Bring forth Medusa ! turn the wretch to stone !

Badly th' assault of Theseus we repaid :"  
Thus, glaring down, all shrieked with threat'ning  
tone.

" Turn ! " cried the Poet—" cover quick thine eyes ;  
Shouldst thou but glance upon the Gorgon's head,  
Never again could'st thou behold the skies."

My hands distrusting, with his own instead,  
He turned me round from their vindictive ire,  
And with his shadowy fingers veiled my gaze ;  
O ye whose intellects are sound ! admire  
The mystic meaning my strange verse conveys.

Swept now amain those turbid waters o'er  
A tumult of a dread, portentous kind,  
Which rocked with sudden spasms each trembling  
shore,  
Like the mad rushing of a rapid wind.

As when, made furious by opposing heats,  
Wild through the wood th' unbridled tempest scours,  
Dusty and proud, the cringing forest beats,  
And whirls abroad the branches and the flowers ;  
Then fly the herds—the swains to shelter scud.  
Freeing mine eyes—" Thy sight," he said, " direct  
O'er the long-standing scum of yonder flood,  
Where most condense its acrid steams collect."

As frogs before their enemy, the snake,  
Quick scatt'ring through the pool in timid shoals,  
On the dank ooze a huddling cluster make,  
I saw above a thousand ruined souls  
Flying from one who passed the Stygian bog,  
With feet unmoistened by the sludgy wave ;  
Oft from his face his left hand brushed the fog  
Whose weight alone it seemed, annoyance gave.  
At once the messenger of heaven I kenned,  
And tow'rd my master turned who made a sign  
That hushed I should remain and lowly bend ;  
Ah me ! how full he looked of scorn divine !

He reached the portals—with a little rod  
Touch'd them—unbolted, instantly, they flew ;  
Then on the horrid threshold as he trod ;  
" O heav'n-expelled ! " he 'gan—" accursed crew !  
What frantic pitch of insolence is this ?  
Why vainly kick against the will Supreme

Whose mighty aim was never known to miss ;  
Which oft hath added to your pains extreme ?

Hope ye in fighting with the Fates to win ?  
Your Cerberus, bethink ye, to this day,  
Bears he not hairless his galled throat and chin ? ”  
This said, he journeyed back his loathsome way.

Nor did he deign to notice us, but wore  
The look of one whom graver cares weigh down,  
Than any heed of whom he stands before ;  
Securely then advanced we tow’rd the town.

His hallowed words fresh confidence inspired ;  
The gates we passed without a farther fray ;  
And I, who curiously to see desired  
Their state who pent in such a stronghold lay,  
Soon as I entered, sent my gaze around,  
And lo ! a champain vast on ev’ry side,  
Wherein all torments and all griefs abound,  
I mark with wonder, stretching far and wide.

Ev’n as at Arles, where spreads the stagnant Rhone,  
Or as at Pola, where Quarnaro’s waves

Bathe and bound Italy, the fields are strewn  
And rendered ridgy with a thousand graves :

So, though more horrible, this region seemed,  
For here mid sepulchres were sprinkled fires,

Wherewith th’ enkindled toms all burning gleamed,  
ed,  
Metal more fiercely hot, no art requires.

Their lids were all suspended, whence arose  
Distressful groans and murmurs of lament,  
As though from wretches plunged in direst woes.  
“ Master,” said I ; “ What sinners here lie pent ?  
What buried race thus mutter from the vaults ? ”  
He answered thus : “ Th’ Arch-Heretics behold !  
Leaders of sects, with all who shared their faults.  
Here like with like, each with his kind’ inurned,  
In tortures more or less intense are cast : ”  
So saying, to the right my master turned,  
Then ’twixt the tombs and lofty tow’rs we passed.



# INFERNO. HELL.

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## CANTO THE TENTH.

THE BURNING TOMBS OF THE ARCH-HERETICS.  
FARINATA DEGLI UBERTI : CAVALCANTE DE' CAVALCANTI.

Now by a narrow path my master winds,  
Conducting me 'twixt those tormenting tombs  
And the town walls. "O thou, whose goodness finds  
A passage for me through these impious glooms!  
Say, sov'reign Virtue! satisfy my hope;  
May man behold the wretches buried here  
In these dire sepulchres?—the lids are ope—  
Suspended all—and none is watching near."

To this he answered; "When they come at last  
Clothed in their now forsaken frames of clay,  
From dread Jehoshaphat\*—the judgment past—  
These flaming dens must all be barred for aye.

\* "When in mid air the golden trump shall sound,  
To raise the nations under ground;  
Then in the valley of Jehoshaphat  
The judging God shall close the book of Fate;  
And there the last assizes keep  
For those who wake, and those who sleep."—**DRYDEN.**

Here in their cemetery, on this side,  
With his whole sect is Epicurus pent,  
Who thought the spirit with its body died :  
Soon, therefore, thy desire shall be content—  
Ay, and the secret wish thou hid'st from me :”—  
“ Good guide,” I said ; “ I only veil my heart,  
Lest of mine utterance I appear too free :  
Thyself my monitor of silence art.”

“ O Tuscan ! thou who com'st with gentle speech,  
Through Hell's hot city, breathing from the earth ;  
Stop in this place one moment, I beseech—  
Thy tongue betrays the country of thy birth.  
Of that illustrious land I know thee sprung  
Which in my day perchance I somewhat vexed.”  
Forth from one vault these sudden accents rung  
So that I trembling stood with fear perplexed.  
Then as I closer to my master drew—  
“ Turn back ! what dost thou ? ” he exclaimed in  
haste—  
“ See ! Farinata rises to thy view—  
Now may'st behold him upward from his waist.”  
Full in his face already I was gazing,  
While his front low'red, and his proud bosom swelled,  
As though ev'n there, amid his burial blazing,  
Th' infernal realm in high disdain he held.  
My leader then with ready hands and bold,  
Forced me tow'rd him, among the graves, to pace,



Saying; "Thy thoughts in open words unfold."  
So by his tomb I stood—beside its base.

Glancing upon me with a scornful air,  
"Who were thine ancestors?" he coldly asked.

Willing to answer, I did not forbear  
My name or lineage, but the whole unmasked.

Slightly the spirit raised his haughty brows,  
And said: "Thy sires to mine were aye adverse—  
To me, and to the cause I did espouse—  
Wherefore their legions twice did I disperse."

"What though they banished were? they all re-  
turned,  
Each time of their expulsion;" I replied:

"That is an art thy Party never learned.  
Hereat arose a shadow at his side:

Uplifted on his knees he seemed to me,  
For his face only to his chin was bare;  
And roundabout he stared, as though to see  
If other mortal with myself were there.

But when that momentary dream was o'er,  
Weeping he groaned—"If thou this dungeon dim,  
Led by thy soaring genius dost explore,  
Where is my son? ah wherefore bring'st not him?"

"Not of myself I seek this realm forlorn—  
He who waits yonder marshals me my road;

Whom once perchance thy Guido had in scorn : ”  
My recognition thus I fully shewed ;  
For in the pangs on that poor sinner wreaked,  
And in his question plain his name I read—  
Suddenly starting up—“ What! what!”—he shrieked ;  
“ Say’st thou, ‘ he *had* ? ’ what mean ye ! is he dead ?  
Doth heaven’s dear light his eye no longer bless ? ”  
Perceiving how I hesitated then,  
Ere I responded to his wild address,  
Backward he sunk, nor looked he forth again.

But that proud soul who first compelled my stay,  
The same unalterable aspect wore ;  
Moved not his neck, nor turned him either way ;  
Stood fixed ; then thus continued as before—  
“ And if that art my brethren could not learn,  
It more torments me than this fiery couch ;  
Yet—fifty times ere Luna’s visage burn—  
How hard that lesson is thyself shalt vouch.  
But tell me, I implore thee, so may’st thou  
In the sweet world forevermore remain ;  
Why that vindictive people still avow,  
In all their laws, their hatred of my strain ? ”

I thus : “ The carnage of that vast defeat,  
Which dyed the waters of the Arbia red,

Provoke such edicts from our judgment-seat.”  
Hereat the spirit sighed, and shook his head :

“ Not singly,” he replied,—“ in arms I rose ;  
Nor without reason, for the cause was just :

But *once* I singly stood—when all her foes  
Would fain have laid my Florence in the dust ;

*Then* I, alone, opposed that base decree.<sup>4</sup>  
“ Pry’thee,” said I, “ this complicated knot  
Resolve and set my tangled reason free,  
So be a long repose thy children’s lot.

If rightly I conceive you, it appears  
Your eyes foresee whatever Time’s dark hand  
Is leading forward in the lapse of years,  
Yet of the present naught ye understand.”

“ True,” he rejoined—“ we see indeed like those  
Whose vision is imperfect, things afar.

Thus much of light the Lord of light bestows ;  
To all near objects wholly blind we are.

And nothing know we of your human state  
Save some one else our ignorance advise :

So, when for aye is shut the future’s gate,  
Know, from that instant, all our knowledge dies.”

Then, with repentance for mine error stung,  
“ Tell,” I entreated, “ yonder fallen shade,  
His son still walks the breathing world among ;  
And tell him why mine answer I delayed :

Say that my mind with misconceit was dim,  
Of which thy teaching now has cleared my thought"—

Here my conductor called me back to him :  
Hastily then the spirit I besought ;

"Say, with thyself what fellow sufferers herd ?"  
"Upward," he answered, "of a thousand more,  
The second Frederic is here interred—  
The Cardinal too—the rest I'll not name o'er."

He vanished here, and tow'rd the ancient bard  
I paced, much pondering what the sentence\* meant  
Which as it seemed, foretold a doom so hard.

He too moved onward, whispering as he went ;  
"Wherefore so pensive ? so bewildered why ?"

When the hid reason of my care I told,  
The sage thus counselled : "That dark prophecy,  
I charge thee, still in thy remembrance hold.

And mark thou this"—he raised his finger here—  
"When thou shalt stand before the gentle ray  
Of her† to whose fair eye all things are clear,  
Thy life's whole pilgrimage will she display."

To the left hand my master turned him then ;  
Quitting the wall, we tow'rd the centre wound,  
By a small path, descending to a glen  
Whence a foul stench uprising, floated round.

\* "Yet—fifty times ere Luna's visage burn—  
How hard that lesson is, thyself shalt vouch."

† Beatrice, in Paradise.



## NOTES.

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### (1) CANTO I.

"Darkling amid the deep obscure he seemed."

Chi per lungo silenzio pareo fioco.

It is best to keep at peace with critic and commentator by avoiding the foppery of new readings. In this passage, however, I am constrained to vary from the usual acceptation because it is not very intelligible. "One who from long disuse of speech appeared hoarse:" this is the common version. But as yet Virgil has not spoken a syllable—did the poet then guess that he was hoarse from his appearance only? Or how may a person *look* hoarse?

Besides, hoarseness is rather an effect of too much talking than of refraining from speech; neither are we taught any where else that the spirits among whom Virgil dwells are at all taciturn. On the contrary, as soon as he returns to Limbo, he is most cordially greeted by his brother bards, who are evidently quite a conversible race, and distinguished in this respect from those others who spoke rarely, "*con voci soavi*."

It would seem then that Dante is only continuing the same figure which he employs a line or two before—"dove'l sol tace," where the sun is silent—*per quel lungo silenzio*—through that depth of gloom—*parea fioco*—a form was dimly seen. The more poetical signification of silence is often darkness rather than absolute deprivation of sound. Silent has the force of *ineffectual*, and this use of the word is thought by Dr. Johnson a hebraism. In the Bible this passage from i. Samuel ii. 9, "the wicked shall be silent in darkness" is not far from Virgil's "*loca nocte silentia late*." By turning indeed to the sixth book of the *Æneid*, we shall find that Virgil often uses similar expressions merely by way of metaphor. He speaks of "*umbræ silentēs*," yet there is no lack of noise in the realm

of Tartarus—Minos too calls a council of these *silent* ones—"concilium vocat silentum"—therefore utter dumbness is not supposable. Petrarch has a sonnet ending thus

"Raro un silenzio, un solitario orrore  
D' ombrosa selva mai tanto mi piacque ;  
Se non, che del mio Sol troppo si perde."

Here, although *silenzio* may be rendered either way, the conceit loses much of its point, unless it is taken to mean "un solitario orrore."

As to the word "*fioco*" in this passage it is not easy to see the propriety of translating it *hoarse* in connection with either sense of *silenzio*—neither silence or darkness causing any roughness of utterance. In Canto III it is applied to light, "*fioco lume*"—the indistinct light; and why should it signify otherwise here? Certainly it is no unusual straining of a trope to apply the same word both to light and sound. "*Fuscus*" in Latin is used in a like way. Quintilian, Lib. xi. Cap. III. has "*fusca vox*." Cicero and Pliny also warrant the phrase. I find in another place that Nero had a voice, like Antony's, "*fuscam*."

Boccaccio's note upon this passage is not quite satisfactory, though somewhat physiological. The amount of what he says is this. The effect of silence is to cause a moistness of the throat which produces a hoarseness; or else, by'r lady, it may cause a dryness which also produces a hoarseness (for this effect defective comes by cause) or else it may be—as 'twere I cannot tell how.

Scolari with more clearness thinks "*fioco*" means "*fiacco*," weak.

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## (2) CANTO I.

"Deemed me unfaithful to his holy laws."

*Unfaithful* is a harsh word for one who was in truth *unknowing* of the Law; but the original, "*ribellante*," is yet more so. Dante is a rigid believer whom even Calvin might have called orthodox. His phrase is something scriptural—he will not hold Virgil and his companions guiltless although guilty through ignorance—"they are of those that *rebel* against the light—they know not the ways thereof." Job. xxiv.

## (3) CANTO III.

"Him who through fear the great Refusal made."

"Il gran rifiuto" seems to refer to some more famous passage in history than the abnegation of the Popedom by Celestine V—but that this must have been an event of great consequence in the age of Dante, is very clear. It had even found its way into hexameters, not a little, it is true, smacking of the cloister.

In the third volume of Muratori, *Rer. Italic. Script.* there is preserved a long and elaborately prosy poem in three books upon the life of this Pontiff—*Opus metricum Jacobi Cardinalis S. Georgii ad Velum-aureum, coevis et in Papatu familiaris*. The following transcript from it is as much to the point and about as poetical as the rest of it.

Fit monachus qui Papa fuit, simplexq. sacerdos,  
Praesul et inclinans aliis qui regia sceptrā,  
Imperii Diadema sacrum, mitraeq. bicornes  
Illustris spectandus Herus etc. etc.

## (4) CANTO X.

"Then I alone opposed that base decree."

This passage may be illustrated by the following from Machiavelli's annals of Florence. Book II. Anno 1260. "Manfred had sent to the Ghibelines as leader of his forces the Count Giordano, a man, at that time, of high repute in arms. The same—after the victory—marched with the Ghibelines to Florence, and reduced that city entirely to the dominion of Manfred, abolishing the magistracies and every other vestige of its former freedom. This wrong, perpetrated with so little prudence, was received with universal indignation; the people, already unfriendly to the Ghibelines, now became their most implacable foes, and the consequence was in course of time their utter destruction. The Count Giordano, being compelled by affairs of State to return to Naples, left in Florence, as Viceroy, the Count Guido Novello, lord of Casentino. This latter called a council of Ghibelines at Empoli, where it was concluded on all hands that, in order to keep the Ghibeline party strong in Tuscany, it was neces-



sary to destroy Florence, which was a mere nursery of Guelfs, capable, on occasion, of supplying plenty of people to reinforce the side of the Church. To this sentence thus cruelly pronounced against so noble a city, there was not a single Florentine who made opposition, except only Messer Farinata degli Uberti. He alone, openly and unconditionally denounced it thus :—

“ For mine own part, O Ghibelines, I will avow that I have not with so much toil incurred so many and so great perils, but for the pleasing hope of one day dwelling in the repose and shelter of my native land. Nor is it now a time for me to give up that wish which hath so long lain close to my heart, nor to refuse that privilege which Fortune holds out to mine acceptance. Nay, I would have all those who with different sentiments design otherwise, to consider me no less an enemy to them than I have been, and am to the Guelfs, and if any one of them is pitiful enough to be alarmed at the existence of his birth-place, let him raise his hand against it to ruin it, if he dare, for I trust that the same valor which helped to drive out the Guelfs from the city of my love will also now enable me to defend it. Farinata was a man of great soul—excellent in war—the head of the Ghibelines, and held by Manfred in high esteem. His authority put an end to that project.”

The affection of Farinata for his native city calls to mind that beautiful oration of Camillus in Livy—Book V. where he so warmly opposes the proposal of the tribunes to leave Rome to its desolation and remove to Veii.

Dante is himself a Ghibeline, although Farinata, in his ignorance of his present position, looks upon him as still a Guelf. The poet therefore exalts the character of his own party by giving to the fierce aristocrat, a grandeur of mind and a lofty tone not unlike that of Coriolanus.

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there  
That like an eagle in a dove cote, I  
Fluttered the Ghibelines in Empoli:  
Alone, I did it.

## A WORD MORE WITH THE READER.

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Having formerly attempted to render a good portion of the "Divina Commedia" into English triplets, I found, in looking over my detached fragments, that the difficulty of the work was too plainly discernible under a partial only and inelegant success. The more exactly the measure was imitated, the ruder the verse; and the more this fault was avoided, the greater the deviation from the true sense. It were easy to paraphrase a writer whose meaning is so compressed that very often a single sentence is hammered out by the annotators, like a little lump of gold, into whole volumes of leaf. But under the restriction of fidelity, our language will not allow an exact likeness of the structure adopted by Dante to be prolonged very far, without a frequent incurrence of barbarisms through stress of rhyme. This may well be granted when we observe the occasional shifts that Dante himself is forced upon\*—the false assonances and sometimes a quaint and harsh usage of words not wholly attributable to the immature age of his dialect. Lord Byron had patience enough to make a version of the story of "Francesca" according to the original measure, and moreover chose the same form for another poem—a sublimer strain too than many of his more fortunate ones—but both performances merely prove what small hope there is for inferior fingers to play powerfully upon a similar string. Besides, it is questionable how far this mole-counting is required of an artist. Perhaps the strict adherence to the triple jingle is about as important to the truth of the likeness as the petty care taken by many translators to tie themselves to the precise number of lines found in their original, and to show by marginal figures that they are mathematically

\*"Speaking of the obscurity of this author, how few of his countrymen, much less foreigners, could fully understand him, Goethe remarked that the difficult rhyme was in a great measure the cause of his obscurity." Eckermann—Conv. with Goethe.

faithful. To such keen arithmeticians it were doubtless a damning flaw should some of these pages happen to fall short, now and then, even of the concise allowance of the most sparing of all poets.

Still charmed by the touch of the mighty master, I have now endeavored to follow him, for a little, in a metre which permits a closer transcript of his meaning. That which seemed the most eligible is the stately and solemn quatrain, the stanza of Gray and of Dryden. This is the nearest approach to the lengthened harmony of the Italian *terza rima* which is recognised by English ears. It is more than a resemblance—as far as it is carried, it is the same. Having thus rough-hewn about a third part of the “Inferno,” it did not seem injudicious to submit these first ten cantos to the opinion of those who are qualified to estimate their value; that if approved I may have the heart to go on—if otherwise the prudence to give up a needless undertaking which could promise at best only the minor praise due to a skilful copier.

It could hardly be hoped, at this late day, to render a work which has remained so long inaccessible, except to scholars, a popular English poem. The taste for allegory is satisfied with a slender supply—one good specimen perhaps is enough for a language. In this province of the world of imagination, the right of preoccupation is paramount, and the vulgar already have their “Commedia” in the admirable dream of John Bunyan. The more refined, amid a wilderness of delight, seldom choose to tread the precincts of gloom and pain. Others, who might be led by a pleasanter path to the place of horror, are appalled at the erudite perplexities, the darkness and the doubt which even the learned complain of. Yet that this apparent obscurity has been overcharged will be acknowledged by very many students. Many will admit that their brains ache no more over the “Divina Commedia” than over the pages of Alfieri or Manzoni. This indeed is, and must continue, contrary to the general opinion of the poem; for, from its nature, it is fated to be the study of a particular class of readers only. However the old women of Verona may have enjoyed it, when its satire was fresh, the sort of popularity which causes the more taking strains of Tasso to be recited to this day, on the Mole at Naples, it never can attain. To understand it well presupposes more intimacy with ancient authors than is usually the gift of those who snatch their literature distractedly and in haste. It has become no prodigy, in the universality of education, to find a mechanic or a man of business who has cultivat-

ed a laudable familiarity with the great works of antiquity. But this class must commonly stop at the first hardly won fountain for which they have acquired a relish. Enough for them the beauty—the early simple beauty of the ancients—whatever lies farther on is sacred to the more leisurely. Into the enchanted region which lies beyond the classics our Athenian blacksmiths do not intrude. To them Dante is sealed forever by the fine-spun discussions and abstruse explanations of the commentators.

It is certainly a chilling consideration that the *Iliad*—save the sacred books, reckoned the oldest extant—written too in the tongue of an age which was antiquity to the prophet Isaiah—should be a less disputed theme and more plainly comprehended than this production of comparatively modern times, whose dialect is that of to-day—the characters of which are men whose portraits and whose armor yet hang in the galleries of their old castles—and the localities of which are as hodiernal as Saint Peter's and London bridge. A modest reader is awed at the amount of book-learning which he is presumed to possess before he can peruse the Sphinx-like scroll. He soon tires of the mysteries that envelope a single line. How often must he pause in his admiration, until authorized by the notes to admire historically; how often is he turned aside from some passage full of poetry and pathos to contemplate the silly arguments, the verbal peculiarities, and possible allegory, that the expounders have so elaborately piled upon it. Now it is clear that the poet in changing his "*Ultima regna canam*" for the present "*Nel mezzo cammin*"—in descending from the stiff dignity of a dead language to the common speech of mortals, designed to make his book intelligible, plain and universal. In an era when saintly doctors and sages committed their thoughts to the fixed and unalterable diction of former generations, he steps forth from the crowd of pedants and scholiasts and Ciceros of the cloister to speak in the tongue of the people—in the phrase of Cacciaguida and his townsmen of Florence. It is true that as he was neither writing a novel, nor an "article" for an hour's pastime—as he felt that he was engaged in a sacred labor to which heaven and earth lent their aid, he put forth his strength to the task, and he demands of his reader some portion of intellectual exertion. His was a genius that could not consent to spin love-sonnets to the last, and they whose studies are of the magazine sort must doubtless find that he talks in parables hard and prolix. That age has dimmed his al-

lusions cannot be denied, but his prevailing feature is by no means either obscurity or harshness.

It would be unjust to tax him with all the strained analogies and involved references to forgotten events and personages which he has gathered from the generosity of his interpreters. It is absurd to find in his verse not only more meaning than meets the ear, but more than meets the understanding or himself intended. He offers himself to the world as a Poet—the sixth among those of “*la bella scuola*,” whereof Homer is the master, and it is as a Poet we are to receive him—not as a mere chronicler or a grammarian or a philosopher. Even when blind to the allegory, we need not be deaf to the poesy. Is there not somewhat in Hamlet which is not easily understood? Is there not much in Holy Writ? Is the song of Solomon less beautiful to those who cannot see its relation to the Saviour? It is equally unfair, but it is not an unusual error to consider the “*Commedia*” in respect to its style, as an old-fashioned, antiquated production—“the stretched metre of an antique song”—made up of obsolete expressions and quaint in structure as in thought. Many who count themselves tolerable scholars, really believe it to stand in Italian literature as primitively and perversely uncouth as the works of Chaucer or at least of Spencer appear in ours. Several English writers have not a little helped to promote this fallacy by treating of it as if the author were a kind of “ancient Gower” who had absolutely the creation of his language. There is some confusion of chronology on this point. Dante died a few years before Chaucer was born; but it is proper to keep in mind that whereas two hundred years before the age of the latter, Britain retained its rude Saxon jargon, at that time Italian was the elegant speech of a polished people, and had been, for many centuries. The term “vulgar” cannot be applied to it in its lower sense—it was the vulgar idiom indeed, but the vulgar idiom of courtiers and of princes—in ducal, in episcopal courts. Before the date of the Saxon Heptarchy—a sufficiently barbarous era in British history—Latin had given way in Italy to its more melodious offspring.

Dante ranks among us in somewhat of the same predicament with Goethe. Both seem vapid and uninspiring to those who cannot drink of their fountains at the rocky source. But the Florentine has this advantage over the bard of Weimar; that time, which alone forms the enduring crystal, has tested by upwards of half a thousand ages the hardness of his reputation, and proved that it is not glass.

The opinion of what we call the world—the cotemporary world—is fallacious ; but the judgment of the real world—the world of generations—must be accepted ; the one is the seeming horizon that extends a little way only, the other is the true one which embraces the hemisphere. In this universal verdict how few are the names, from the great flood, which may justly be catalogued with Dante ? And even of these how few are not indebted to that which no genius can compass—the luck of precedency in date. He has not indeed left one of those universal works which exact tribute from all sympathies. There is an individuality in his imagination which makes those whose fancies run wholly in another vein, sensible only of his difficulty or his dulness. He is less to be commended than loved, and they who truly feel his charm will need no argument for their passionate fondness. With them he has attained that highest favor of an author—exemption from those canons to which the little herd must bow. As in the case of our own *Shakspeare*, it does not much affect our judgment that a profound *Schlegel* should have ignorantly praised, or a witty *Voltaire* flippantly abused him. So with Dante—whether he has been glorified by the Germans or derided by Frenchmen it matters little. Yet if renown be at all measurable by number of editions or variety of commentators, he may hold his head above all other poets in this respect. Consider too how far his fame has travelled. It is true, mere wideness of reputation is nothing now-a-days except as it is concomitant with durability. But if *Horace*, amid the groves of *Tibur*, already pin-feathered in imagination, could plume himself on the prospect of being one day read beside the *Rhone*, let it also be remembered what a stretch it is from *Arno* to the *Hudson*.

Aware of all this, many of those who would number among their poetical acquaintance the great imaginative mind of the middle ages, wonder why, in the most approved versions, they find so little to repay them for a study so severe. The learning, skill and patience of those who have expounded the “dark Italian Hierophant”—a labor which *Charles Lamb* compared to the explication of the *Apocalypse*—are generally conceded. But it requires almost equal talents and learning to appreciate their merits. It is constantly requisite to refer to the original for an elucidation of the elucidator ; and when by the aid of comparison and conjecture the sense is obtained, the utmost that is gratified is curiosity. There is this advantage which a foreign author must always possess over his translators. A

strange tongue easily hides poverty of thought—a weak Latin or Greek line for instance, appears to have more value than the same idea rendered vernacular. To us the poorest of Tully's does not seem altogether so execrable. That insipidity likewise which is veiled for us by the gracious accent of Tuscany, and which is dignified for an Italian by obsolete words and an antique cast, when turned into plain, palpable modern English, is put to a hard test. Nor is a servile imitator allowed to bestow his tediousness as freely as if he were speaking in his own person. The beauties, if he exhibit any, belong to his master, of course; the stupidity must needs be his own. "*Fas est obrepere somnum*" must not be quoted by a translator.

It should also be urged in favor of the copiers of Dante that his style would be unfairly represented by a version polished, facile and harmonious in the extreme. Chapman, perhaps, with all his coarseness, might have hit his manner more nearly than Pope. How different a narration would the author of *Eloisa's* Epistle have made of the story in the fifth Canto—how would he have spun out the voluptuous particulars, in all their fulness, of that happy sorrow! "*The transient roses flying from the cheek—the clasping arms glued around the phantom—the delicious poison of*

—smiling eyes attemp'ring every ray  
And sweetly lambent with celestial day."

Dante dwells not long upon the details. A few pithy touches—a deep stroke or two in the right place—the tale is told.

But Foscolo—Macaulay—Carlyle have already expressed whatever the world was waiting to have uttered on this head. Further comment on his manner would be supererogatory. Nor is it quite just to dilate so much as some have done upon his concise method of narration. As a simple relater of a story it were idle to compare his *art* with that of many other writers. Why overlaud that brevity of description which is not uniformly a merit? He does not always condescend either to describe or to narrate. He too frequently shows his power by outlines only. He contents himself with hints and reminiscences; for he treats of what is known, of what has already been told. From his chary muse Ovid's fable of "*Myrrha*" obtains as few verses as he devotes to "*Pia*." This peculiarity has led a French critic to remark that the great defect of his poem is its "*lack of episode*," whereupon another asserts that it is made up of episodes, and noth-

ing else. But indeed if one must be thus technical, there is room for blame. Not infrequently his curt parsimony of phrase becomes a fault, and we are forced to wish that the imperfect speaker had told us more. Yet this blemish, too, like its opposite one of tiresomeness, is mainly perceptible in the translation. The attempts to restore the old picture bring out its worst spots. When the Poet is least to be praised there is still a majesty, a music in his utterance—in his most ungracious mood,

“Quanto aspetto real ancor ritiene!”

In consequence then of his eccentric flight, the ordinary epic statutes were as ill a measure for him as Aristotle's would be for Shakspeare. If the *Inferno* be judged by any other poem it should only be by the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*. The critic may not find it always correct, complete, and regulated with classical exactness; for the latitude of his theme allows him a corresponding license of style. The Poet is in the universal realm, beyond the bounds of Time. The distinctions of earth are dead for him. Being among all orders and all generations of men, he is free from the fear of anachronism and, with a liberty which Milton dared to follow, he mingles Elysium with Paradise—the beings of Olympus with saints and seraphim—the monsters of mythology with the heroes of romance. He brings together in one dreadful scene gods and devils—cardinals and centaurs—all Pagan, and all ecclesiastical imagery. In his hands, Virgil becomes a true believer, and even the heathen deities are veiled with a hue of Catholicism, like the brazen Jove which modern faith has christened into an apostle. He looks at once upon individuals of all periods—he recognizes, with a single glance, Averroes and Plato—Tristan, Achilles and Semiramis—the sage Tiresias and Michael Scott. He sees the baronial tyrants of his own age plunged with Dionysius and Alexander in a river of boiling blood. They are guarded by the Minotaur; and the Furies, at the gates of the iron-walled city of Dis, are repelled by an angel from the throne of the Most High. In his wild incongruity, his grotesque deviations from the beaten way of art, he reminds us, at times, of those edifices in Tuscany which are neither Greek nor Gothic, yet bear a resemblance to both. He recalls that chequered fame in Florence—his own darling—“il mio bel San Giovanni”—beautiful but strange; an antique novelty—elegant in its very uncouthness; at once a Christian baptistery and an old temple of Mars.



Still it would be a light estimation of the "*Divina Commedia*" to regard it simply as a work of pure fiction. The place it claims in History, and the results partly owing to its influence upon opinion, require that it should be approached with reverence as well as with love. It derives its modern interest not only from the illustration it affords of the old feudal age, but in some degree from the relation which its characters or events hold to the present period. It is of mere school-boy importance for us to learn the genealogy of the personages in the *Iliad*. What they did or where they dwelt is of no consequence except to the Fancy. But it does concern us to know about the men whose usurpations, whose vices or whose talents led on, step by step, to that great religious emancipation which even yet is not wholly complete. In this poem also we find our faithfullest record of the science of those times which gave it birth ; for we may safely believe that its author embodied in himself all the learning of that day. Any farther enlargement upon his intellectual rank may come with a better grace from one of his own countrymen, to whose enthusiasm will be allowed somewhat that, put forth by a mere amanuensis, might provoke a smile of negation. From an eloquent Lecture by one of our best Italian scholars, I am permitted to transcribe the following paragraph :

"Dante was the true Father of the Reformation. Nothing in this particular can equal the boldness of his muse. It strikes without distinction at the crowns of kings, the mitres of bishops, the tiara of the Pope himself. With regard to the latter, he disputes his temporal power ; he denounces his spiritual usurpations ; he denies his infallibility ; he denies him the power of absolution and excommunication. He believes in our salvation by grace ; he exposes the intrigues and corruption of the Papal court, and the venality of benefices ; he sees in Papal Rome the lustful beast of the Revelations ; he deplores in the church of Christ the continual traffic in the name of Christ, and solicits him to come and chase the venders and buyers of his holy church, of the holy temple cemented and consecrated by the blood of the Martyrs. Moreover, he was the greatest philosopher of his age. We are filled with astonishment when, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, we find him uttering those scientific prophecies, made almost two ages before they were verified. He showed himself familiar with the sphericity of the earth, and alluded to the existence of a western hemisphere. He manifests an

acquaintance with the theory of the winds and a curious insight into the phenomenon of the production of rain. He hinted at the laws of gravitation—anticipated Newton's theory of attraction and repulsion, and announced the tendency of the magnet to the polar star. He described, in a very poetical manner, a clock which sounds matins to awaken the spouse of God and make her seek his love. He anticipated also the discovery of the circulation of the blood; he described and explained the phenomenon of the shooting stars, and long before the telescope of Galileo, he taught us that the milky way was nothing else than the combination of light with an immense multitude of smaller orbs."

In estimating the character of this poem, there seems to be much ground for the opinion that its author considered himself as one destined to work some important change. He was a spirit of too much reality to turn aside in the strength of his manhood—after hard service in field and council—in the fulness of experience—in the fulness of sorrow—for the sake of amusing himself with an idle song. It is impossible, at this day, to be sure that we comprehend his aim. Whether with prophetic eyes he was looking forward to the happy innovations of coming centuries; or whether, wholly absorbed in remembrance, his only design was to record and punish the infamy of the past, we can neither assert nor deny. Many seeds must always be scattered before the fortunate one that springs up into a visible and permanent growth. The glory of the Reform has accordingly been deduced from other kindred sources; even Petrarch's name has been written down with those of Erasmus and Melancthon. Granting whatever allowances are due to fervent admiration, thus much must be acknowledged. No era in the annals of literature is more clearly distinguished than that Restoration which dates from the time of Dante. Till then letters had smouldered in monasteries—their dull warmth enjoyed only by the monk and the recluse. He first restored them to the world in a style worthy of the great master whom he professed to imitate. We may very reasonably trace to him that opposition between learning and the Papacy which shook the Church in its strongest hold, and was not soothed until the prudent benignity of Leo bought back the favor of the scholar, and won over to himself the minstrel and the artist.

Had the work of reforming Christianity begun as its first institution began, among the unlettered and the lowly, the bookmen of the

cloister might have fought against it more successfully. But the pioneers in this cause were not fishermen now. The student and the sage took up arms against the mitre, under the sign of the cross—the gentle spirits of the closet and library were already stirred—the Poet had girded on the sword of Purification—the liberal and cultivated classes were ripe for the coming of the monk who was to awaken the people. When we consider the hardihood it required of this monk to step forth from the ranks of the faithful and promulgate his heresy—remembering too the timidity with which such men as Erasmus avoided an open militant attitude with established errors, we may well be surprised at the daring plainness with which Dante, almost two hundred years before, handled the faults of the Holy See. He abounds with implicit allusions to truths evidently of old growth in his own mind, but as yet unfamiliar to the world. He antedates in his own opinions the purged Catholicism of modern times. The same manliness of thought, which led him in a superstitious era, when astrology and necromancy were among the tenets even of the wise, to speak so contemptuously of magic and its impostures, emboldens him also against the chicanery of the crosier. The philosophical historian may not allow that the revival of Letters was the moving principle of the Reformation. It is very evident that neither poetry nor painting nor music could have been a capable instrument. We know that it was even feared that the result of these might rather have been to restore Paganism. The study of the classics too often went hand in hand with impiety and licentiousness to prove more than a weak weapon against the Evil One. To this day, the early Fathers of modern literature, both in France and Italy, are pointed at for their coarse profanity. Above and beyond all these Dante stands apart and undefiled. He neither seeks to furnish fools with jests and ribaldry, nor takes the pen with tender fingers for his own elegant amusement. It is for him a battle-axe. In his grandeur and gloom, in the deep ardor of his enmity, he seems among the great names of his country more like a sturdy German than a sighing Florentine. In his earnestness and truly Christian zeal—in tone and sentiment at least, he is indeed an earlier Luther. Yet the difference is wide between them. We cannot easily conceive the devout and passionate poet changed by the reflux of public opinion into a staid and quiet Protestant. It is hard to guess in what modern perversion of the primitive creed his Faith could have found a resting place. In what present sect or form might

he not still have encountered the craft and pride and avarice of the churchman—corruption worthy of a Pope, and sin deserving a corner in some new Canto of Hell?

With such views of the character and serious importance of the “*Divina Commedia*,” it is plain that it should not be lightly approached by a translator in a mere turn of enthusiasm. It demands in justice more care and deliberation than one should bestow on his private pleasure. If the iron Alighieri himself confessed that his sacred song had made him lean, through many years, it may be acknowledged that, for ordinary faculties, simply to transmute the precious ore into a merchantable shape were no insignificant work. To render him properly requires in short somewhat of Dante’s own moods—it needs time and toil—fasting and solitude might not be amiss.

It is only to obtain the judgment of the scholar upon the comparative quality of my little specimen, and the probable value of the undertaking, that this ordeal of egotism is incurred. The kindness, perhaps, will be greater should he receive it less according to its deserts than after his own honor and the dignity of the subject. Yet even his blame is not so much to be deprecated as his utter silence; and surely the respect due to the master ought to shield the servant from his indifference—out of reverence to the god perhaps he may not scorn the suppliant—or may the pedantry be pardoned me of giving the Sophoclean phrase;

*μη μ' ἀτιμον, τοῦ θεοῦ γε προσάτην,  
οὐτως ἀφῇ γε, μηδὲν ἀντειπὼν ἔπος.*

The fairer class of critics, also, in the inevitable dulness of much of this version, will take into consideration the object essentially aimed at. Although it must be rated by its merits as a piece of English versification, a requisite equally imperious is that it should keep to the sense of the Original.

T. W. PARSONS,

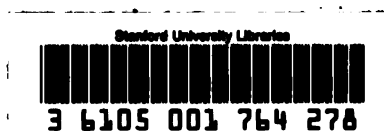
*Boston, July, 1843.*







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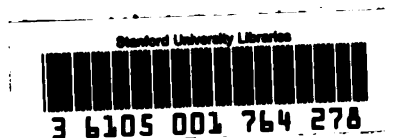


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